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An unending variety of topics

Thursday, September 07, 2006

Law of the dominant paradigm

This is from a very old Usenet post of mine:

I can only mention [in reply to a previous post] my Law of the Dominant Paradigm:

> Given opposing opinions with equal evidence in their favor, the less popular opinion is more likely to be correct.

To see why this is so, consider how evidence -- facts, data, observations, etc. are obtained and transmitted by human culture. Each observer and transmitter passes on a filtered version of the evidence, either consiously or unconsiously, to fit a particular paradigm. If most of the information gatherers in a society -- journalists, academicians, writers, movie studios, etc. -- subscribe to one out of several possible opinions, it is natural to expect that more evidence will be gathered that supports that opinion than the others, even if the some of the other opinions have equal validity. This does not mean that evidence is useless; it means that evidence is a function both of the reality and the paradigms held by the information gatherers. Evidence given in an argument must be adjusted by the resources devoted to gathering evidence in favor of each opinion. The amount of bias caused by the dominant paradigm effect is not well-defined, but an extremely new or unpopular opinion is likely to have little evidence in its favor, since little has been done to gather such evidence.

On the net, it is very easy to fall into the mindset of simply agreeing with and copying those already dominant on the net. Far more fruitful are original ideas, disagreements, and working to find evidence for unpopular and new opinions to determine their worth.

Posted by Nick Szabo at 1:16 AM

1 comment:

Alex Kozak said...

I'm not sure about using the term "correct". Does that mean that the less popular opinion usually is true, or describes the world in a more accurate manner?

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If the less popular opinion is true, then this does not seem to be any sort of a law whatsoever; we wouldn't need any theories beyond the true ones.

Also, evidence is not easily observed and quantified. How would we be able to tell which claim has more evidence without quantifying and comparing the two setsfrom within a paradigm?

This law does not really state much, and I don't think it would hold true.

9:19 PM

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